

**Vision:** The Interfaith Collective envisions a diverse community where all have a home, safety and belong.

**Mission:** Guided by those with lived experience of homelessness, we will accomplish this vision by

- Bringing information and education about the experience of homelessness to our own communities of faith,
- Advocating, supporting, and creating opportunities for people to be housed.

## Moving on and Moving in

There have been some changes to the Interfaith Steering Circle over the summer. We say goodbye to Saran Mallinson as she moves from her position with Central Okanagan Journey Home Society to a new position with Okanagan College. Saran was instrumental in supporting Interfaith in its formation and we wish her well in her new role. We also welcome Alberto DeFeo from the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints as the newest Steering Circle participant.

### Steering Circle Participants:

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## Small things make Big difference

The Interfaith community was able to respond to several SOS appeals during the summer. Michael Lea, a youth worker with BGC shares the following story:

Fast action was needed to help a mother and her teenager in crisis who unexpectedly lost their housing. Non-profits and government agencies were unable to meet the needs of this family in a timely manner and shelters for women and children were full across the Okanagan. One of several options involved driving long distances but they were low on funds and their vehicle needed tires. Their situation was presented to the Interfaith Collective and the next day, David Ruis (Vineyard Faith Community) offered to purchase tires for their vehicle and through Shirley gas cards were also made available. These generous offers created a sense of hope during uncertain times.

Unfortunately, their situation is still dire. Circumstances changed and the family had to sleep in their vehicle during a heat wave. The tires and gas cards became an important part of their new shelter - their vehicle. The tires allowed them to find shaded areas to park in and the gas cards helped keep the air-conditioning on in the vehicle when needed.

Their situation is on-going, and they are still looking for stable housing. This story is a reminder that our social safety net is often underfunded and slow to respond to crisis. The Interfaith Collective showed they can be a responsive, flexible, and generous addition to the current social services system.

## A summer of successful working together



In June, a young student required a laptop to be able to continue with schooling. Anxiety and other circumstances made in-class attendance difficult. Following an email to the Interfaith Steering Circle, we were able to find a used laptop from a local business that was delivered to the student.

In August, the Interfaith Collective received an appeal from Tricia Brewer, with the Okanagan BGC Emergency Youth Shelter which serves youth aged 13-19, and with an approved exemption, aged 19-24.

The shelter receives a weekly food supplement from the food bank, but typically spends \$100 extra a month on food to supplement the groceries still needed. With the shortage that has been experienced everywhere right now, the amount of food provided has been decreased and funds have been stretched. The shelter provides breakfast and a packed lunch and needed breakfast and lunch menu items.

Although there are 10 beds available, when youth show up, alternative options are sought with their natural supports (Family, friends, relatives) to see if there is a place they can stay. If no safe alternative is found, they can access the shelter for a safe space for youth to meet their basic needs.

Following an email to Interfaith Steering Circle and to St Michael's and All Angels and Central Okanagan United Church food/outreach programs, both cash and food is now supporting the work of the Emergency Youth Shelter. Many people from the faith communities have shared that they were unaware of the Emergency Youth Shelter as part of BGC Okanagan.

It has been outstanding that faith communities have stepped up in these specific areas to quickly fill needs that would otherwise remain unmet. This is what we can do together!



The N2NPP continues to move forward. A meeting was held August 24 with volunteers from three faith communities who were able to gather in person with Stephanie Laing, one of the researchers from the Kelowna Homelessness Research Collaborative (KHRC) at UBCO to review goals and objectives and ask questions.

By matching volunteers to newly housed individuals, the project will provide opportunity to strengthen relationships and foster a sense of community connection and social support, in an effort to reduce the potential for re-entry into homelessness. Volunteers will be provided with training and ongoing support as they gain knowledge about the experience of homelessness and creating home.

The hope is that project experience will provide a framework for a larger involvement from faith communities.

Please continue to share the Interfaith Newsletter as widely as possible with your faith community and with other links you may have. We are in the process of building a larger Interfaith Steering Circle. If you know anyone who might be interested in participating, contact Shirley [piedt@telusplanet.net](mailto:piedt@telusplanet.net) or Danielle [uudaniellewebber@gmail.com](mailto:uudaniellewebber@gmail.com)

**The need for winter shelters is just around the corner. Can your faith community help in any way? Look for further information about how to support winter shelters in the next issue.**